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Drawing upon role theory, aging is defined as the patterned flow of individuals through a series of positions, roles, role sets, and position sets. From this perspective, the aging process is one of continual adaptation to transitions in social positions and associated role relationships. Data on the retirement transition are used to test and give support to the generalization that processes of anticipatory socialization (previous preparation and adjustment) aid adaptation to social transition. Exploration of the influence of social rank on intensity of socialization experience shows that, the higher the social rank, the higher the anticipatory socialization to retirement. Finally, the theoretical importance of focusing on formal properties which cut across all changes of social position, is emphasized. (Four tables and 22 footnotes are included.) (Author/LY)

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SOCIAL RANK, MORALE, AND ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION TO THE RETIREMENT POSITION*

Population Note No. 9

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon role theory, aging is defined as the patterned flow of individuals through a series of positions, roles, role-sets, and position-sets. From this perspective, the aging process is one of continual adaptation to transitions in social positions and associated role-relationships. Employing data on the retirement transition, Merton's generalization that processes of anticipatory socialization facilitate adaptation to transitions in social position is tested and given support. In addition, the influence of social rank on intensity of socialization experience is explored, and the results indicate that: the higher the social rank, the higher the anticipatory socialization to the retirement position. Finally, the theoretical importance of focusing on formal properties which cut across all transitions in social position is emphasized.

SOCIAL RANK, MORALE, AND ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION TO THE RETIREMENT POSITION

The emergence of retirement as a stable social pattern has come to occupy a place of central importance in contemporary Western society. As the proportion of persons aged 65 and older in the United States has shifted from 4.1 per cent in 1900 to 9.4 per cent in 1966, the proportion of males 65 and older in the labor force has declined from 63.1 per cent to 26.9 per cent.[1]

With the development of retirement as a new social position available for increasing numbers of people at increasingly earlier ages, theoretical and research interest has come to focus on processes of anticipatory socialization to the retirement position.[2] Anticipatory socialization is a concept widely employed in role theory literature.[3] As defined by Merton, anticipatory socialization refers to the process of learning behaviors and values found in positions in which an actor is not yet engaged but which the actor is likely to enter.[4] Merton has discussed the function of anticipatory socialization in preparing actors for future positions in their position-sequences.[5] Actors respond to cues in behavioral situations--some explicit and deliberate, others implicit and informal--and collaterally prepare for future social positions and roles.[6] Israel has noted that before formal position occupancy begins, an individual may gain knowledge about actions and necessary resources through mechanisms of direct and indirect learning.[7]

From the perspective of role theory, we may define aging as the patterned flow of individuals through a series of positions, roles, role-sets, and position-sets. In this context, the aging process is viewed as one of continual adaptation to transitions in social positions and

role relationships. Generally speaking, the most fundamental position transitions in the life cycle of the individual appear to be those which portend shifts in the relative importance or dominance of institutional realms; for example, from familial to educational (young child--student), from educational to economic (student--worker), from the economic to the leisure realm (worker--retiree).[8] These and other transitions in social position require individual adaptation to new circumstances and exigencies.

Linton has discussed the fact that various societies differ in their demands for individual reorientation in the course of the life-cycle, but all of them make such demands. The main differences between societies, according to Linton, lie in the abruptiveness of the reorientations and the ages at which they are expected to occur. Linton goes on to make the assessment that the more gradual the transitions between age categories, the less difficulties individuals find in assuming and playing new roles, and the more likely they are to be satisfied with their new position.[9] Put a little differently, Parsons has noted that a change in position may lead to strain. Vested interests in the status quo designates the general resistance to change which is more or less inherent in the institutionalization of roles in the social system. Parsons views the role-relationship as a point of interdependence between motivational processes and social structure--vested interest in maintaining the gratification of "need dispositions involved in an established system of role expectations."[10]

Merton has argued that one major function of anticipatory socialization is to facilitate individual adaptation to the encroaching position transition. Anticipatory socialization serves to give continuity to position-sequences and curtails the abruptiveness and discontinuity of individual reorientations required.[11] One major purpose of this presentation is to empirically test Merton's argument. If we assume that

adaptation to retirement is at least partially reflected by the level of morale of the retiree, we may hypothesize that:

1. The greater the anticipatory socialization to the retirement position, the greater the level of morale in retirement.

That is, the more intensive the worker's retirement socialization experience prior to retiring, the higher will be his level of morale in retirement.

However, Merton has noted that patterns of orientation toward past, present, and future positions at different stages of the life cycle almost surely vary by position in the social structure--but "systematic knowledge about this has yet to come."[12] Along these lines, it has been argued that socialization processes are selective and vary quantitatively and qualitatively by social class. For example, Hyman has argued that lower class youth are not socialized to place high value on education, and this serves to dampen social mobility.[13] In addition, Bronfenbrenner has proffered the generalization that socialization practices are most likely to be altered in those segments of society which have most ready access to the agencies or agents of social change--most notably, the upper and middle classes.[14] Somewhat more germane to the problem at hand, Barron has argued that retirement preparation is a middle class phenomena[15]--a reflection of the general future oriented values and activities residing in the middle but not the lower classes. Following these arguments, we would state a second hypothesis that:

2. The higher the social rank of the individual approaching retirement, the higher the anticipatory socialization to the retirement position.

We tested these two hypotheses in our analysis of the retirement patterns of a sample of retired individuals in southern Wisconsin.

Data and Methods

The data are from interviews in 1967 with 284 retired men in three communities in southern Wisconsin. The respondents were obtained through two procedures. First, an area-probability sample, coupled with a screening interview, was used to locate retired men in the largest community studied (170,000 population). Second, a random sample was drawn from a complete enumeration of retired males in the two smaller communities studied (8,000 and 3,000 population). The respondents ranged in age from 63 to 99, with the median age of 74.

In order to capture as much as possible of the "conceptual space" of the illusive variable, anticipatory socialization, we combined three indicators into an index: number of plans for retirement, amount of pre-retirement discussion about retirement, and amount of pre-retirement reading about retirement. We asked our respondents to designate whether they had made economic, leisure, residential, and other plans for retirement. The number of plans made ranged from 0 to 4. We also asked our respondents to recall the amount of pre-retirement discussion about retirement they had with their wives, children, relatives, friends, and where applicable, a retirement counselor at their place of employment. Some or frequent discussion with each of these persons was scored 1, very infrequent or no discussion was scored 0. The range on amount of pre-retirement discussion about retirement was 0 to 5. Finally, we asked our respondents how much reading about retirement they did prior to retiring. The reading score ranged from 3 (a great deal) to 0 (no reading). We then summed the indicators to construct the anticipatory socialization index.[16] The range of the index is from 0 to 12, with a mean of 3.3.

Our second variable, social rank, is measured by (1) number of years of formal education, and (2) pre-retirement occupational position. We decided to examine each of these indicators separately since the size of their intercorrelation still leaves considerable room for each to have differential associations with other variables.[17]

Our third variable, level of morale in retirement, is measured by two separate empirical indicators. The first, level of satisfaction with retirement, is a simple, three-point measure of the retiree's satisfaction with the specific transition in social position under study--worker to retiree. The second measure is level of life satisfaction, which is a thirteen-item, short-form version of the Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Neugarten and Havighurst[18] and tested and modified by Wood and Wylie.[19] The level of life satisfaction is a general morale measure and supplements the more specific retirement satisfaction index.[20] The life satisfaction scale ranges from 0 to 26, with a mean of 19.02. For purposes of tabular analysis and to maintain comparability with the retirement satisfaction measure, we trichotomized the life satisfaction index into low, medium, and high groups.

Findings

Anticipatory Socialization and Morale

Following Merton, we tested the hypothesis that anticipatory socialization would be positively related to morale in retirement (Table 1). This is indeed the case. Both measures of morale are significantly related to the anticipatory socialization index (tau = .19 and .18, respectively). Over twice the percentage of respondents who experienced high anticipatory socialization to the retirement position are very satisfied with both retirement and their life (49 per cent) as are those retirees who scored

TABLE 1

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION BY MORALE IN RETIREMENT

Anticipatory Socialization	Retirement Satisfaction: Dissatisfied %	Dissatisfied N	Satisfied %	Satisfied N	Very Satisfied %	Very Satisfied N	Totals N	Totals %
Very Low (0)	30%	(16)	46%	(25)	24%	(13)	54	100
Low (1-2)	23%	(20)	49%	(43)	28%	(24)	87	100
Medium (3-4)	18%	(12)	41%	(28)	41%	(28)	68	100
High (5-12)	14%	(10)	37%	(27)	49%	(36)	73	100
Totals		58		123		101	282	

Tau = .19. Chi Square = 13.93, with six degrees of freedom; probability less than .025, with a one-tailed test.

Anticipatory Socialization	Life Satisfaction Index: Low %	Low N	Medium %	Medium N	High %	High N	Totals N	Totals %
Very Low (0)	22%	(12)	54%	(29)	24%	(13)	54	100
Low (1-2)	20%	(17)	45%	(39)	36%	(31)	87	100
Medium (3-4)	10%	(7)	46%	(31)	44%	(30)	68	100
High (5-12)	10%	(7)	41%	(30)	49%	(36)	73	100
Totals		43		129		110	282	

Tau = .18. Chi Square = 12.30, with six degrees of freedom; probability less than .05, with a one-tailed test.

very low on the anticipatory socialization index (24 per cent). Thus, Merton's argument that anticipatory socialization facilitates adaptation to transitions in social positions is given support by our data on the retirement transition.

Social Rank and Anticipatory Socialization

Our second hypothesis, that there would be a positive association between social rank and anticipatory socialization to the retirement position, is also given support by the data (Table 2). The relationships between both measures of social rank, education and occupation, with

TABLE 2

OCCUPATION AND EDUCATION BY
ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION TO THE RETIREMENT ROLE

Occupation*	Anticipatory Socialization Index: Very Low		Low		Medium		High		N	%
Upper White Collar	9%	(6)	29%	(19)	21%	(14)	41%	(27)	66	100
Lower White Collar	16%	(5)	37%	(12)	19%	(6)	28%	(9)	32	100
Upper Blue Collar	24%	(17)	37%	(26)	21%	(15)	18%	(13)	71	100
Lower Blue Collar	31%	(25)	27%	(22)	24%	(20)	18%	(15)	82	100
Farm	3%	(1)	26%	(8)	42%	(13)	29%	(9)	31	100
Totals		54		87		68		73	282	

Tau = -.21. Chi Square = 29.20, with 12 degrees of freedom; probability less than .005, two-tailed test.**

Education	Anticipatory Socialization Index: Very Low		Low		Medium		High		N	%
0-4 years	29%	(7)	33%	(8)	13%	(3)	25%	(6)	24	100
5-7 years	26%	(14)	39%	(21)	18%	(10)	17%	(9)	54	100
8 years	20%	(19)	34%	(32)	23%	(22)	23%	(22)	95	100
9-11 years	14%	(4)	21%	(6)	38%	(11)	28%	(8)	29	101
12 years	13%	(3)	33%	(8)	42%	(10)	12%	(3)	24	100
13-15 years	17%	(4)	26%	(6)	26%	(6)	31%	(7)	23	100
16 or more	9%	(3)	18%	(6)	18%	(6)	55%	(18)	33	100
Totals		54		87		68		73	282	

Tau = .20. Chi Square = 30.59, with 18 degrees of freedom; probability less than .025, one-tailed test.

*Upper white collar is professional, technical, managers, owners, and proprietors. Lower white collar is clerical and sales. Upper blue collar is craftsmen and foremen. Lower blue collar is operatives, private household and service.

**We used a two-tailed rather than a one-tailed test with occupation because it was not clearly linearly scalable due to the ambiguity of the farm category. In the computation of tau for that relationship, farmer was located between lower white and upper blue collar.

anticipatory socialization, are in the predicted direction (tau = .21 and .20, respectively) and are statistically significant. Forty-one per cent of the upper white collar respondents scored high on anticipatory socialization in contrast to only 18 per cent of the lower blue collar workers. Similarly, over twice the proportion of respondents with 16 or more years of formal education scored high on the anticipatory socialization index (55 per cent) as did those who have had four or less years of schooling (25 per cent). Thus, according to both occupation and education: the higher the social rank, the higher the anticipatory socialization to the retirement position.

Anticipatory Socialization and Morale Within Social Ranks

At this juncture, two important questions arise. First, is the relationship between anticipatory socialization and morale spurious--a result of the joint influence of social rank on both anticipatory socialization and morale? That is, are persons of higher social rank both likely to have higher anticipatory socialization and higher morale, but when social rank is controlled, the relationship between anticipatory socialization and morale disappears? The second and related question concerns the differential impact of anticipatory socialization within social classes. That is, anticipatory socialization--although facilitating adaptation to the retirement transition among the more "future oriented" upper and middle classes--may still be basically a "middle class" concept and as such may be less relevant to the morale in retirement of lower class individuals.

In order to provide an answer to these questions, we looked at the relationship between anticipatory socialization and morale within occupational and educational groups.[21]

TABLE 3

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION BY RETIREMENT SATISFACTION WITHIN OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

Anticipatory Socialization	Retirement Satisfaction* **Upper White Collar	Lower White Collar	Upper Blue Collar	Lower Blue Collar	Farm	N
Very Low	50% (6)	40% (5)	18% (17)	20% (25)	- (1)	54
Low	21% (19)	50% (12)	39% (26)	18% (22)	- (8)	87
Medium	79% (14)	67% (6)	20% (15)	35% (20)	23% (13)	68
High	48% (27)	56% (9)	62% (13)	60% (15)	11% (9)	73
Totals	66	32	71	82	31	282
Tau***	+.17	+.18	+.16	+.21	+.15	+.19

*Proportion who are very satisfied with retirement.
**Upper white collar is professional, technical, managers, owners, and proprietors. Lower white collar is clerical and sales. Upper blue collar is operatives, private household, and service.
***Although only the percent very satisfied are presented in the cells, the tau coefficients are based on the relationship between the anticipatory socialization index as presented and a trichotomized retirement satisfaction index.

The positive relationship between anticipatory socialization to the retirement transition and morale in retirement is manifested among all occupational groups (Table 3). As a matter of fact, the association is higher among the lower blue collar (tau = .21) than it is among the upper white collar respondents (tau = .17). Similarly, the positive relationship between anticipatory socialization and morale is manifested among all educational groups, although the association is very weak for the group with eight years of education (Table 4). Again we observe that the association is actually higher in the group with the lowest amount of education (0-7 years, tau = .26) than the group with the highest amount of education (13 or more years, tau = .10). Thus, with regard to both occupation and education as measures of social rank, there is little evidence to

TABLE 4

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION BY RETIREMENT SATISFACTION WITHIN EDUCATIONAL GROUPS

Anticipatory Socialization	Retirement Satisfaction* 0-7 years	8 years	9-12 years	13 or more years	N
Very Low	5% (21)	37% (19)	14% (7)	57% (7)	54
Low	21% (29)	28% (32)	29% (14)	42% (12)	87
Medium	31% (13)	32% (22)	52% (21)	50% (12)	68
High	53% (15)	36% (22)	46% (11)	60% (25)	73
Totals	78	95	53	56	282
Tau**	+.26	+.04	+.22	+.10	+.19

*Proportion who are very satisfied with retirement.
**Although only the percent very satisfied with retirement are presented in the cells, the tau coefficients are based on the relationship between the anticipatory socialization index as presented and a trichotomized retirement satisfaction index.

support an argument proposing differential impact of anticipatory socialization on adaptation to the retirement transition within social classes.

Summary and Conclusions

Drawing upon role theory, we defined aging as the patterned flow of individuals through a series of positions, roles, role-sets, and position-sets. As such, the aging process is viewed as one of continual individual adaptation to transitions in social positions and role-relationships. Employing data on the retirement transition, we tested Merton's generalization that processes of anticipatory socialization facilitate adaptation to transitions in social position. Assuming morale to be at least a partial indicator of adaptation and employing a three-item anticipatory socialization index, we found that: the greater the anticipatory socialization to the retirement transition, the greater the morale in retirement.

Following the work of Hyman and others, we explored the influence of social rank on intensity of socialization experience. In line with our hypothesis, we found that the higher the social rank, the higher the anticipatory socialization to the retirement transition. In addition, we found that although individuals of lower social rank undergo less intensive socialization, the relationship between anticipatory socialization and morale in retirement is actually stronger for individuals of lower social rank.

In concluding, we would like to argue for a role theory approach to the aging process which focuses on the formal properties of transitions in social positions--variables that pertain to all transitions in social positions.[22] The importance of formal properties such as anticipatory socialization and morale is that they allow us to develop propositions that potentially apply to all transitions in social position. Thus retirement can be meaningfully compared to other position transitions such as worker--unemployed, wife--divorcee, etc. This approach should lead to codification of increasing amounts of diversified data and perhaps ultimately, to a parsimonious system of interrelated general theoretical propositions--the proper goal of scientific inquiry.

Footnotes

[1]H. B. Brotman, "Year-end Statistical Round-up," Administration on Aging, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D. C., 1966.

[2]For example, c.f.: Wilma Donahue, "Retirement: The Emerging Social Pattern," in Clark Tibbits (ed.), The Handbook of Social Gerontology, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 330-406; Ida Simpson, et.al., Social Aspects of Aging, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1966; W. E. Thompson, "Pre-retirement Anticipation and Adjustment to Retirement," Journal of Gerontology, 15, 1960; J. Tuckman and I. Lorge, Retirement and the Industrial Worker: Prospect and Reality, New York: Bureau of Publications, 1953.

[3]For example, c.f.: L. Cottrell, "The Adjustment of the Individual to His Age and Sex Roles," American Journal of Sociology, 7, 1942, E. C. Hughes, "Dilemmas and Contradictions in Status," American Journal of Sociology, 50: (March, 1945); J. Israel, "Problems of Role-learning," in J. Berger, M. Zelditch, and B. Anderson, Sociological Theories in Progress, Volume 1, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966; R. Linton, "Age and Sex Categories," American Journal of Sociology, 7: (October, 1942); R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957, Chapter 9; T. Nadel, The Theory of Social Structure, Victoria: The Melbourne University Press, 1957; T. Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States," American Journal of Sociology, 7: (October, 1942).

[4]R. K. Merton, op.cit., p. 385.

[5]In the tradition of Linton, Merton refers to status rather than social position. However, status carries honorific connotations, and from our point of view is better replaced with the more neutral term, social position. Therefore, where Merton refers to statuses, status-sets, and status-sequences, we will refer to positions, position-sets, and position-sequences. The meaning remains the same, the terminology has simply been changed.

[6]R. K. Merton, Ibid.

[7]J. Israel, op.cit., p. 207.

[8]C.F.: T. Parsons, "General Theory in Sociology," in R. K. Merton, et.al., Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959, pp. 3-39, for a somewhat related discussion focusing on "stages" in the socialization process.

[9]R. Linton, op.cit., pp. 589-603.

[10]T. Parsons, The Social System, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951, p. 491.

[11]R. K. Merton, op.cit., p. 385.

[12]R. K. Merton, op.cit., p. 386.

[13]H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in S. Lipset and R. Bendix, Class, Status, and Power, New York: The Free Press, 1966, pp. 488-500.

[14]U. Bronfenbrenner, "Socialization and Social Class Through Time and Space," in S. Lipset and R. Bendix, op.cit., p. 376.

[15]M. L. Barron, "The Dynamics of Occupational Roles and Health in Old Age," in J. E. Anderson (ed.), Psychological Aspects of Aging, Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1956, pp. 236-239.

[16]The product-moment correlations between the three indicators are: planning, reading = .320; planning, discussions = .411, discussions, reading = .320.

[17]The correlation between occupation and education varies with the placement of the farm category between .30 and .40.

[18]B. Neugarten, R. Havighurst, and Sheldon Tobin, "The Measurement of Life Satisfaction," Journal of Gerontology, 16: (April, 1961), pp. 134-143.

[19]V. Wood and M. Wylie, "An Analysis of a Short Self-report Measure of Life Satisfaction: Correlation With Rater Judgements," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society, New York City, 1966.

[20]The product-moment intercorrelation between retirement satisfaction and life satisfaction = .473.

[21]For brevity, we employed only retirement satisfaction as a measure of morale in Tables 3 and 4. Fundamentally, the same pattern is manifested when the life satisfaction index is employed as a measure of morale in retirement.

[22]For a discussion of the importance of formal properties for theory construction in general and role theory in particular, see: B. Biddle and E. Thomas, Role Theory: Concepts and Research, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966.

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